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Mayor



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COUNTY OF KAUAI

KAUAI FIRE DEPARTMENT

News Release

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Thirteen graduate from the Kaua'i Fire Department's 28th firefighter recruit class

LĪHU'E – The Kaua'i Fire Department held a special ceremony on Friday to graduate 13 recruits from KFD's 28th firefighter recruit class at the Līhu'e Civic Center's Mo'ikeha courtyard.

"Congratulations to these 13 individuals and their families for this great achievement," stated Fire Chief Robert Westerman. "Mahalo for your willingness to serve our community, residents and visitors, and for beginning your journey first as responders."

Deputy Fire Chief Kilipaki Vaughan began Friday's ceremony with the firefighter's prayer.

"These 13 gentlemen began March 1, 2018, and endured six months of accelerated training under the leadership and supervision of training Captain Michael Scovel, Firefighter 3 Kaeo Kinoshita, and Firefighter 3 Jeremy Cole. Our fire fighter trainees or recruits will join the fire line effective Sept. 2, 2018," stated Deputy Fire Chief Vaughan.

Inscribed on the badges the recruits received Friday are the tools of their trade – a helmet, an axe, a ladder, and a fire hydrant.

"Our recruits are embarking on their new journey to help others, and they never give up on this mission to serve our community," said Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr. "Congratulations to you and your 'ohana for surpassing all tests and challenges you've had to face in order to achieve this great moment today."

The 28th firefighter recruit class also presented a Ha'a (humility), a protocol or dance is meant to showcase the pride, tradition, honor, and professionalism of the Fire Service. This protocol is meant to work hand-in-hand with the Kaua'i Fire Department Honor Guard. The Ha'a was composed by Devin Kamealoha Forrest, brother to Fire Fighter Chandler Atta Forrest.

The following individuals received badges at Friday's ceremony: Darren Agustin, Ryan Allen, Makana Denton, Benjamin Ferris, Samuel Higgins, John Jensen, Kyle Kaili, Kauluokala Kauwe, Cy O'Brien, Ryo Shintani, Spencer Taylor-Steik, Jetsen Wakuta, and Justin Watts.

Darren Domingo Agustin was born in Līhu'e and currently resides in 'Ele'ele. Darren is a 2003 Graduate of Kauai High School. Darren would like to acknowledge his wife Alana, daughters Aaliyah and Dakota, and parents Rodolfo and Luz Agustin. Darren would like to extend a special mahalo to Captain Scovel, FF3 Kinoshita and FF3 Cole, and all KFD personnel who helped prepared the 28th Recruit Class to serve our community to the highest standard. Fire Fighter Trainee Agustin will begin his assignment at Lihue Fire Station under Captain Curtis Langstaff. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Agustin was his wife Alana Agustin.

Ryan Allen was born in San Diego, California, and currently resides in Wailua House Lots. Ryan is a 2011 Graduate of Clairemont High School. Ryan possesses Fire Science Certification with some GE classes. Ryan would like acknowledge his family, friends, and mentors for their love, support, and guidance to get to this point in his career and life.

Ryan would to extend a special mahalo to Captain Scovel, FF3 Kinoshita, and FF3 Cole. Ryan also sends a special mahalo to KFD for providing him this opportunity to join this amazing brotherhood. Fire Fighter Trainee Allen will begin his assignment at Koloa Fire Station under Captain Shawn Thompson. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Allen were his parents John Allen and Liane Pestrella.

Makana Denton was born and raised on Kaua'i and currently resides in Ōma'o. Makana is a 2007 Graduate of Kaua'i High School. Makana would like to acknowledge his wife Shaunessy, father Ken, sister Lauren, son Oliver, and In-laws Roxy and Mike for their continued

love and support over the course of his training. Makana would also like to extend a special thanks to the Staff of the Kaua'i Fire Department for the memorable training and welcoming him into the KFD 'Ohana. Fire Fighter Trainee Denton will begin his assignment at Hanapēpē Fire Station under Captain Bill Quinlan. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Denton was his wife Shaunessy Denton.

Benjamin Kaikea Ferris was raised in and currently resides in Kīlauea. Ben is a 2009 Graduate of Kaua'i Community School for Adults. Ben possesses a Bachelor's Degree in Business Entrepreneurship from University of Hawai'i Mānoa Shidler College of Business. Ben would like to acknowledge his parents Ben and Colette Ferris, as well as, his girlfriend Fran for their non-stop support and understanding. Ben would like to extend a special mahalo to the many people that influenced and encouraged me to pursue this career in KFD. Fire Fighter Trainee Ferris will begin his assignment at Kōloa Fire Station under Acting Captain Blair Yamashita. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Ferris was his parents Ben and Collette.

Sam Pohaku Higgins was born in Honolulu and currently resides in Lāwa'i. Sam is a 2006 Graduate of Punahou School. Sam possesses a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education from Linfield College. Sam would like to acknowledge his parents Rocky and Daralynn Higgins, brother Kainoa, and fiancé Victoria. Sam would like to send a special mahalo to his 'Ohana for their love, encouragement, & support. Sam would also like to thank all of the people who have impacted my life and helped shape the person he has become including KFD and all on Kaua'i that have welcomed him into this new chapter of his life. Fire Fighter Trainee Higgins will begin his assignment at Koloa Fire Station under Captain Gary Joseph. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Higgins were his parents Rocky and Daralynn.

John "Jay" Kupihea Jensen was born on Oahu and currently resides in Kekaha. John is a 1990 Graduate of Konawaena High School. John possesses a Bachelor of Science degree in Athletic Training from University of Nevada Las Vegas. John would like to thank his wife Nila for getting up with him at 4 a.m. every day and supervising his gains throughout Recruit

Training. John would like to extend a special mahalo to FF Pono Pananganan, FF3 Nick Pananganan, and the KFD Recruit Training Officers who took time to teach the 28th Recruit Class. Fire Fighter Trainee Jensen will begin his assignment at Hanalei Fire Station under Captain Kurt Leong. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Jensen was his wife Nila.

Kyle Kaili was born Honolulu and currently resides in Līhu'e. Kyle is a 2006 Graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapalama. Kyle possesses a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Administration from the University of La Verne. Kyle would like to mahalo his parents Kekoa and Lisa Ledesma and brothers Makana Ledesma, Chad Kalima, and Tyson Kaili. Kyle would like to send a special mahalo to Captain Scovel, FF3 Kinoshita, FF3 Cole, FF3 Hawthorne, and all the other Recruit Training Instructors who helped prepare the 28th Recruit Class to graduate and get to the Fire Line. Fire Fighter Trainee Kaili will begin his assignment at Waimea Fire Station under Captain Jayson Pablo. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Kaili were his parents Kekoa and Lisa Ledesma.

Kauluokala Kauwe was born and raised in Waimanalo and currently resides in Kalāheo. Kaulu is a 1996 Graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapalama. Kaulu possesses a Bachelor Degree in Hawaiian Studies and Masters Degree in Education from University of Hawai'i Mānoa. Kaulu would like to acknowledge his wife Clarisse, sons Kule'a and Kuka'i, and daughters Nakili and Hawewe. Kaulu would also like to acknowledge his parents Kula and Bootsie Kauwe, In-laws Pat and Barbara Sayegusa, and Uncle Abe and Aunty Nan Aiona for their constant love and support. Kaulu would like to extend a special mahalo to Training Captain Scovel, FF3 Kinoshita, FF3 Cole, FF3 Hawthorne, EMS Trainer Jillian Kelekoma, and the Recruit Training Officers who instructed throughout the 6 months of Recruit Training. Fire Fighter Trainee Kauwe will begin his assignment at Kalaheo Fire Station under Captain Chauncey Pa. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Kauwe was his father, retired Honolulu Fire Captain Fire Fighter Kula Kauwe.

Cy O`Brien was born and raised on Kaua`i and currently resides in Wailua Homesteads. Cy is a 2011 Graduate of Kapa`a High School. Cy would like to thank his mother Margie Okano, father Patrick O`Brien, step-father KFD Fire Fighter 2 James Pelegrino, and grandfather Bryan Okano. Cy would like to extend a special thanks to all of the KFD members who put all of their time, effort, and belief in the 28th Recruit Class and continued to them to succeed. Fire Fighter Trainee O`Brien will begin his assignment at Lihue Fire Station under Captain Joey Durocher. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee O`Brien was his father FF2 James Pelegrino.

Ryo Shintani born in Misato, Japan, and currently resides in L`hu`e. Ryo is a 2005 Graduate of Kaua`i High School. Ryo possesses a Bachelor Degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Psychology from Soka University of America. Ryo has furthered his studies in Spanish at Universidad de San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador and Music Therapy at Berklee College of Music. Ryo would like to acknowledge his parents Katsunori and Taeko Shintani, sister Mai and Brother-in-law Tom Del Ninno, his extended family in Japan and Washington D.C., the Sushi Katsu `Ohana, the Kaua`i SGI `Ohana, as well as friends and family all over the world. Ryo would like to extend a special mahalo to every single person who has encouraged him through this Recruit Training process including friends, family, all of KFD, and the County of Kaua`i. Ryo thanks every single person involved in making the 28th Recruit Class employment and training happen – from the smiles to the scoldings. Ryo is very thankful for everything. Fire Fighter Trainee Shintani will begin his assignment at Kalaheo Fire Station under Captain Dodd Apao. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Shintani were his parents Katsunori and Taeko Shintani.

Spencer W. Taylor-Steik was born in Seattle, Washington, and currently resides in Kīlauea. Spencer is a 2001 Ballard High School Graduate and possesses a Bachelors of Arts Degree from Western Washington University. Spencer would like to acknowledge his wife Whitney, son Jackson, and parents Bill and Deborah. Spencer would like to extend a special mahalo to wife Whitney for her love and support, son Jackson for his inspiration, and his parents for their guidance. Fire Fighter Trainee Taylor-Steik will begin his assignment at Hanapēpē Fire

Station under Captain Clyde Weddell. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Taylor-Steik were his son Jackson and wife Whitney.

Jetsen Huali'i Minoru Wakuta was born in Līhu'e and raised in Kapahi where he currently resides. Jetsen is a 2006 Graduate of Kapa'a High School. Jetsen attended Golden West Community College and Kapiolani Community College. Jetsen graduated from Trade School with a Journeyman Labor Certificate. Jetsen would like to mahalo to his parents, brothers and their spouses, and all the 'Ohana for the support throughout this Recruit Training period. Jetsen feels he could not have done it without their support. Jetsen would also to extend special mahalo to wife Yvette and sons Jetsen Jr. and Kanaloa, who sacrificed along with me throughout this Recruit Training. Jetsen sends his mahalo for their understanding and staying strong when he was not available as much as he wanted in the last six months in order to complete the Recruit Training journey. Fire Fighter Trainee Wakuta will begin his assignment at Waimea Fire Station under Captain Dan Hirata. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Wakuta was his son Jetsen Huali'i Minoru Wakuta Jr. (Elua), accompanied by wife Yvette and son Kanaloa Wakuta.

Justin William Watts was born in Newport Beach, California and currently resides in Līhu'e. Justin is a 2007 Graduate of Kalāheo High School. Justin possesses a Bachelor Degree in Business Marketing from University of Hawai'i Mānoa. Justin would like to acknowledge his parents Ken and Sheila Watt, sister Kendal, and girlfriend Naomi. Justin would also like to extend a special thanks to Captain Scovel, FF3 Cole, FF3 Kinoshita, and his brothers of 28th Recruit Class for their strength and guidance. Fire Fighter Trainee Watts will begin his assignment at Waimea Fire Station under Captain Jeremie Makepa. Pinning Fire Fighter Trainee Watts was his father Ken Watts.



Pictured above from left to right: Battalion Fire Chief Solomon Kanoho, Deputy Fire Chief Kilipaki Vaughan, Darren Agustin, Ryan Allen, Makana Denton, Benjamin Ferris, Samuel Higgins, John Jensen, Kyle Kaili, Kauluokala Kauwe, Cy O'Brien, Ryo Shintani, Spencer Taylor-Steik, Jetsen Wakuta, Justin Watts, Battalion Chief Jason Ornellas, Battalion Fire Chief Gary Hudson, and Assistant Fire Chief Dean Lake.

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Link to photos of ceremony and video of Ha'a:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1nAlhaqFtAyDBFdERsfBug23cv5s4nApz?usp=sharing>.